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ABSTRACT

As the cry for accountability rises from students to teachers, to parents and administrators, college and university teacher education programs find increasingly difficult demands are made upon them to demonstrate that these programs do, in fact, produce competent teachers. Yet, these programs remain assaulted by overlapping accrediting agencies and disciplinary bodies--all with their own sets of standards and expectations. This paper discusses one school's attempt to implement a required rubric for demonstrating competence in the Writing Process Standards for the State of Illinois (Language Arts 13-18). The paper notes that although these standards are in many ways similar to the NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) (and thus the National Council of Teachers of English) standards for demonstrating competence in the writing process, the difference in accountability suggests that disciplinary methodologies do not complement each other, rather they impose values upon each other. It finds that the need to produce documented and scored (and differentiated--opposed to simple checklist) data required by the educational accrediting institutions demonstrates micro managing of English classrooms and outcomes. The paper describes five "traps" for rubric writers and teachers of writing which are embedded in Illinois' writing process standards. It states that the bottom line is that accountability is called for, not for positive reasons, but rather, because of the perpetual "crises" in education, a scapegoat is needed, and teacher education seems like the next one available. Rubrics for three different teacher education courses are appended. (NKA)

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Micro-Managing the Writing Process in Teacher Education.

by Buzz R. Pounds

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NCTE
21 November 2002

Micro-Managing the Writing Process in Teacher Education

In teacher education programs, instructors are expected to assist English Education majors in learning and being able to teach the writing process(es), but the current assault on these programs by accrediting agencies force programs into models of accountability that in fact micro-manage the assessment in these programs.

As the cry for accountability rises from students to teachers, to parents and administrators, college and university teacher education programs find increasingly difficult demands are made upon them to demonstrate that these programs do, in fact, produce competent teachers. Yet, these programs remain assaulted by overlapping accrediting agencies and disciplinary bodies--all with their own sets of standards and expectations.

This paper discusses one school's attempt to implement a required rubric for demonstrating competence in the Writing Process Standards for the State of Illinois (Language Arts 13-18). Although these standards are in many ways similar to the NCATE (and thus NCTE) standards for demonstrating competence in the writing process, the differences in accountability suggest that disciplinary methodologies do not complement each other, rather impose values upon each other. Thus, the need to produce documented and scored (and differentiated--opposed to simple checklist) data required by the educational accrediting demonstrates micro managing of English classrooms and outcomes.

The story is really a simple one. One day while we were minding our own business, we received word of a colloquium by the Education Department at our school. Since we are part of the teacher education program, we attended. By the end of that meeting we were frazzled and

discombobulated. We were being asked to design rubrics to match all of the state's standards for English language arts. Slowly and surely we pared the list of 30 down to a manageable 15 or so and left the rest for the Education Department to work with.

Herein lies the first trap. The standards, which are based on NCATE/NCTE standards, are sufficiently vague. We have to create specific rubrics for general practices; thus, we began by eliminating any semblance of content in our rubrics. Although this may sound like an objection, I suppose we were also the first to recognize that this could profit us. We don't have to really settle on what students must know; rather we have to settle on whether or not students can do something. In fact, the standards document attempts to distinguish between knowledge and performance, but these distinctions seem arbitrary. For writing, the students are not obligated to know all the different kinds of brainstorming activities, but they must know at least a few of them, or better yet, be able to use one or two in a paper and an assignment. Or, as the standard indicates: "The competent language arts teacher understands the importance and value of prewriting as a component of the writing process" and "explains and reinforces the importance of prewriting as a component of the writing process." But this is getting ahead of ourselves.

The second trap was more insidious. While many members of the English Department view standards qualitatively, the Education Department wanted numbers. Throughout this paper, when I suggest that the school's Education Department wanted something, I want to note that this is almost synonymous with the state Education Department wanting something as the school Education Department was the lens through which the state mandate was viewed. Unless the standards were quantifiable, they would not be accepted. This number crunching also affected the way in which we expected numbers to be interpreted. The Education Department wants numbers that reflect a wide range of possible numbers (that, is some students do not measure up) whereas

some in the English department were content to ensure that students mastered the material, thus failure was not an option. For writing, the option to suggest that students used a sufficient number of brainstorming activities won out over the option to suggest students were tested on brainstorming and given a percentage of correct answers. As noted, the standard themselves seem to opt for the "competent" language arts teacher, not the good or excellent one. This remained a recurring theme.

The third trap set before us was to assign classes where the standards would be taught and where students would have the opportunity to be assessed via the rubrics. Because most of the standards ask that students "understand, model, and teach" some relevant part of the writing process, this either suggests that students will be given standards in three classes or have one class where all standards are dealt with. For writing, that meant dividing the "understand and model" from the "teaching." Understanding and modeling went into the required English writing class—Advanced Writing, and teaching went into the pedagogy class—in this case, Teaching Writing. Here, of course, lies a difficulty. Students in Advanced Writing are not all Education majors, and using the rubric would make for different assessments or assessments not necessarily apropos for those who are not Education majors. Students in Teaching Writing are education majors (those who are not quickly drop), but using the rubric on their papers would involve different purposes and audiences than the course could accept. And, while Advanced Writing could handle the additional assessment, another assessment in Teaching Writing would interfere with the other goals in the course, namely important content about pedagogy, multi-cultural learning, computer-assisted instruction, theory, and such. Ironically, it might strengthen the argument against standardized testing or statewide writing assessments.

On the other hand, one class retained one of the writing standards in its entirety. The standard on publishing (18) was assigned to Grammar for Teachers, for no apparent reason other than the existing standards would be quite a task for the other classes as is. This standard caused some contention within the department. As all students are required to take the general education communication requirement, we thought several standards might be addressed elsewhere. But, we decided that having general education teachers be responsible for documenting behavior even before the students have declared their major was not a good idea—as we would have moved some standards to the first-year writing courses ourselves—so we let the communication department off the hook. Because of the expectations that these standards be assigned classes, Advanced Writing is the loser of this game having 5 of the writing process standards (13, 14, 15, 16, 17) assigned to it. In an odd balancing act, the editing and proofreading standards are separated from the publishing standards, but this state of affairs may not continue as 17 might be later sent to Grammar for Teachers.

A fourth trap has already been alluded to but is further demonstrated by the standards themselves—namely, the writing process that the state mandates is inadequate. This is not to suggest that if only the state would improve their idea of the writing process then the standards would be acceptable. Many scholars have acknowledged that the writing process is not a monolithic process rather it is several processes. The recursive nature of the process is delimited by the requirement that students pre-write, draft, revise, and then edit. This process seems far too linear and circumscribed. Likewise, this linearity is further confirmed by the requirement/ suggestion that teachers provide assignments for each step in the process. I will be the first to admit that this view of writing instruction is more realistic than more extended models of multiple drafts and more favorable than "one and done" drafts, but I do not believe partitioning something

that is more holistic does service to student writers. It would also be on the verge of tackiness to point out that the state writing assessment involves writing that is either devoid of the writing process or condenses that process into a short block of time.

A final trap set for rubric writers and teachers of writing is more theoretical than practical. This involves the general climate that stresses accountable over responsibility. Let's face it; anyone at a smaller school realizes that the state appears to want all small schools to do something other than teacher preparation. The state accomplishes these goals by continually demanding more paperwork, more classes, and more documentation. Larger schools can put graduate students, work-study students, and paraprofessionals to work at shuffling papers, but for small schools the burdens increase. Those of us at small schools also realize that as much as we would like to drop the education aspect of our major, we find that most of our majors are in teacher education (about 75% of our 50 majors); thus, our survival depends on working longer hours to meet the state-mandated requirements. And, of course, this burden becomes another hoop to jump along with North Central accreditation and all of our other responsibilities. The bottom line here is that accountability is called for, but not for positive reasons; rather, because of the perpetual "crises" in education, somebody needs a scapegoat, and teacher education seems like the next one available.

I have provided the rubrics for your perusal. We believe that in many ways we have taken the path of least resistance, yet as I try to have my students in Teaching Writing design lesson plans on their own and with their own stamp on the process, I find the students unclear of how the Education Department's boilerplate version of a lesson plan can be adapted to fit the priorities of the rubric. Students also seem unclear on how one teaches the writing process as a content-less entity. These rubrics are generic but also provide the least common denominator. Remember, according to the state, all we're asking for is the competent language arts teacher.

APPENDIX

English Department Writing Process Rubric
For Students Enrolled in Program One: Teacher Education

Student:_____ Advisor:_____
Instructor:_____ Course: 310 Advanced Writing

Standard	Elements	Dates	Specific Indications	Narrative	Rubric	Score
Standard 13 Student understands and models recognition of rhetorical sensibilities within the writing process.	Student identifies and writes for a specific purpose. 13A, 13E		Purpose (Identified): Purpose (Engaged)		2=Two elements 1=One element	
	Student identifies and writes for a specific audience. 13A, 13E, 13G		Audience (Identified): Audience (Engaged):		2=Two elements 1=One element	
	Student identifies and uses an appropriate mode. 13A, 13F		Mode (Identified): Mode (Engaged)		2=Two elements 1=One element	
	Student revises to align writing with purpose, audience, and mode. 13B		Revision 1: Revision 2: Revision 3:		3=Three Revisions 2=Two Revisions 1=One revision	
	Student uses technology to align writing with purpose, audience, and mode. 13D		Technology:		1=Technology	__/10

English Department Writing Process Rubric
For Students Enrolled in Program One: Teacher Education

Student:_____ Advisor:_____
Instructor:_____ Course: 310 Advanced Writing

Standard	Elements	Dates	Specific Indication	Narrative	Rubric	Score
Standard 14 Student understands and models prewriting strategies necessary for the student to meet a variety of rhetorical situations.	Student identifies and practices prewriting. 14A, 14F		Prewriting (Identifies): Prewriting (Practices):		2=Identifies and Practices 1= Identifies or Practices	
	Student uses multiple prewriting strategies. 14B, 14H		Strategy 1: Strategy 2: Strategy 3:		3=All three strategies 2=Two strategies 1=One strategy	
	Student aligns prewriting with purpose and audience. 14I		Purpose: Audience:		2=Two elements 1=One element	
	Student uses technology to facilitate prewriting strategies. 14E, 14G		Technology:		1=Technology	__/8

English Department Writing Process Rubric
For Students Enrolled in Program One: Teacher Education

Student:_____ Advisor:_____
Instructor:_____ Course: 310 Advanced Writing

Standard	Elements	Dates	Specific Indication	Narrative	Rubric	Score
Standard 15 Student understands and models strategies within the writing process that enable students to progress from prewriting to drafting documents for various and specific rhetorical situations.	Student identifies and practices drafting. 15A, 15F		Drafting (Identifies): Drafting (Practices):		2=Identifies and Practices 1= Identifies or Practices	
	Student drafts using sentences, paragraphs, and organization. 15C, 15I		Sentences: Y / N Paragraphs: Y / N Organization: Y / N	Thesis:	3=All three elements 2=Two elements 1=One element	
	Student uses spelling and grammatical conventions. 15B, 15H		Spelling: Grammar:		4=90% Correctness in sample paragraph 3=80%Correctness 2=70% Correctness 1=60% Correctness 0=Below 60%	
	Student uses a variety of transitions. 15J		Comparison: Contrastive: Additive: Temporal:		4=Four Transitions 3=Three Transitions 2=Two Transitions 1=One Transitions	
	Student uses voice in drafting. 15L		Diction: Word Choice:		2=Two elements 1=One element	
	Student uses technology and conferences to facilitate drafting. 15E, 15M, 15N		Technology: Conferences:		1=Technology	/16

English Department Writing Process Rubric
For Students Enrolled in Program One: Teacher Education

Student:_____ Advisor:_____
Instructor:_____ Course: 310 Advanced Writing

Standard 16	Elements	Dates	Specific Indication	Narrative	Rubric	Score
Student understands and models strategies with the writing process that enable students to revise drafts of documents written for a variety of rhetorical situations.	Student identifies and practices revision. 16A, 16E		Revision (Identifies): Revision (Practices):		2=Identifies and Practices 1= Identifies or Practices	
	Student revises based on rhetorical situation and organization (Global) as well as on conventions, style, etc. (Specific). 16B, 16F, 16, 16G, 16		Situation: Organization: Conventions: Style, Diction, Voice:		4=Four Revisions 3=Three Revisions 2=Two Revisions 1=One Revision	
	Student uses a variety of revision strategies and modes. 16C		Peer/Group: Tutorial: Instructor:		3=Three Elements 2=Two elements 1=One element	
	Student uses technology to facilitate revision strategies. 16I		Technology:		1=Technology	__/10

English Department Writing Process Rubric
For Students Enrolled in Program One: Teacher Education

Student:_____ Advisor:_____
Instructor:_____ Course: 310 Advanced Writing

Standard	Elements	Dates	Specific Indication	Narrative	Rubric	Score
Standard 17 Student understands and models proofreading and editing techniques for documents that address various and specific rhetorical situations.	Student proofreads and edits writing and makes changes from draft to copy based on an understanding of written documents. 17D		Change 1: Change 2: Change 3:		2=Identifies and Practices 1= Identifies or Practices	
	Student edits based on rhetorical situation and organization (Global) as well as on conventions, style, etc. (Specific). 17A, 17G, 17H		Situation: Organization: Conventions: Style, Diction, Voice:		4=Four Edits 3=Three Edits 2=Two Edits 1=One Edit	
	Student understands and uses a variety of resources for editing and proofreading. 17E, 17I		Self-Evaluation Peer-Evaluation Instructor-Evaluation		3=Three Resources 2=Two Resources 1=One Resource	
	Student understands English conventions of grammar, semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology. 17B, 17C		Grammar: Semantics: Syntax: Morphology: Phonology:		Sample Paragraph 5=All elements 4=1 incorrect element 3=2 incorrect 2=3 incorrect 1=4 incorrect. Any mistake indicates lack of mastery.	
	Student uses technology to facilitate proofreading and editing techniques. 17J		Technology:		1=Technology	__/15

English Department Writing Process Rubric
For Students Enrolled in Program One: Teacher Education

Student:_____ Advisor:_____
Instructor:_____ Course: 315 Grammar For Teachers

Standard	Elements	Dates	Specific Indication	Narrative	Rubric	Score
Standard 18 Student understands, models and teachers the preparation of written documents for publication.	Student understands the importance of publishing as an integral component of the writing process 18A, 18F		Student identifies 4 avenues for student publication.		4=Four Avenues 3=Three Avenues 2=Two Avenues 1=Three Avenues	/4
	Student designs a variety of text for different rhetorical situations. 18C, 18H		Student creates two manuscripts for publication following publication information		2=Two Manuscripts 1=One Manuscript	/2
	Student uses and understands the technology required for preparing documents for publication 18B, 18D, 18G		Student formats two manuscripts using available technology		2=Two Manuscripts 1=One Manuscript	/2
	Student composes writing assignments that include the publication of written documents. 18I		Assignment 1: Assignment 2: Assignment 3:		3=Three Assignments 2=Two Assignments 1=One Assignment	/3

English Department Writing Process Rubric
For Students Enrolled in Program One: Teacher Education

Student:_____
Instructor:_____
Advisor:_____
Course: 316 Teaching Writing

Standard	Elements	Dates	Specific Indication	Narrative	Rubric	Score
Standard 13 Student teaches recognition of rhetorical sensibilities within the writing process.	Student composes a writing assignment for 3 different purposes amd audiences. 13C, 13G		Assignment 1: Assignment 2: Assignment 3:		3=Three Assignments 2=Two Assignments 1=One Assignment	/3
Standard 14 Student teaches prewriting strategies necessary for the student to meet a variety of rhetorical situations.	Student composes writing assignments (3) to include a variety of prewriting strategies. 14C, 14D, 14I		Assignment 1: Assignment 2: Assignment 3:		3=Three Assignments 2=Two Assignments 1=One Assignment	/3
Standard 15 Student teaches strategies within the writing process that enable students to progress from prewriting to drafting documents for various and specific rhetorical situations.	Student composes writing assignments that include drafting short documents and multi-paragraph documents. 15D, 15G, 15K		Assignment 1 (Short): Assignment 2 (Multi-Paragraph)		3=Three Assignments 2=Two Assignments	/2
Standard 16 Student teaches strategies within the writing process that enable students to revise drafts of documents written for a variety of rhetorical situations	Student composes writing assignments (3) to include a variety of revision strategies. 16D		Assignment 1: Assignment 2: Assignment 3:		3=Three Assignments 2=Two Assignments 1=One Assignment	__/3
Standard 17 Student understands, models, and teaches proofreading and editing techniques for documents that address various and specific rhetorical situations	Student composes writing assignments (3) to include a variety of proofreading strategies. 17H, 17I		Assignment 1: Assignment 2: Assignment 3:		3=Three Assignments 2=Two Assignments 1=One Assignment	__/3

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